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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7435
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 005329

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2006

In Today's Papers

The Deadly Bombing in Diyarbakir

All papers report the Turkish police said the bomb that killed 11, including five children, in Diyarbakir on 12 September had been detonated by a cell phone and radio. The youngest of the children killed in the explosion was only three years old. The Turkish Revenge Brigade claimed responsibility for the bomb attack in the mainly Kurdish city in southeast Turkey. In a statement posted on its website, the organization stated that they would kill 10 Kurds in Diyarbakir for every Turkish soldier that was killed. Some papers say preliminary investigation shows the explosives were A-4 and C-4, the types used by the PKK in its previous bomb attacks.

Milliyet claims the real target was the Diyarbakir Police Headquarters, located one mile from the site of the blast, but the bomb went off prematurely.

Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP deputy chairman Sirri Sakik said that before the bombing, intellectuals had extended support to a ceasefire call by DTP for the PKK to unilaterally lay down its weapons, reports Yeni Safak. Sakik noted the blast occurred in Diyarbakir's Bagcilar neighborhood, known to be a stronghold of DTP.

Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir called the attack "a provocation," condemning that civilians had been explicitly targeted. The Diyarbakir Bar Association also condemned the attack, saying problems should only be solved through dialog. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly President Ren Van Der Linden strongly denounced the bombing. Van Der Linden said the attack was "barbaric," stressing it proved the need to further improve international coordination against terrorism.

General Ralston Visits Ankara

All papers report the US Special Envoy for Countering the PKK, retired Air Force General Joseph Ralston, expressed sympathy for the victims of Tuesday's bomb attack in Diyarbakir at a news conference with Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) officials in Ankara. "We need visible measures urgently so that not only the Turkish public, but

the Iraqi and the American publics can also see that we are serious about eliminating the threat of terrorism," Ralston said. In the meeting, Turks have given Ralston the message that their patience was running out. Tuygan signaled that Turkey would start unilateral action against the PKK in northern Iraq unless the US moves to combat terrorism.

In a later meeting with his Turkish counterpart Edip Baser, Ralston said he would give President Bush the details about the deadly bombing in Diyarbakir. Ralston later met with Prime Minister Erdogan who expressed Turkish concerns over possible bargaining with the PKK. Ralston assured Erdogan that the US would not deal with the terrorist organization. Papers report Ralston as saying that military operations would be the last option for combating the PKK. "The PKK offices in Iraq must be closed down, and criminals must be captured. The three-party mechanism among Turkey, the US and Iraq should be activated for swift action against the PKK," Ralston said.

Murat Celik writes in the nationalist-sensational Bugun: "The US envoy for countering PKK terrorism made a good impression during his first visit to Ankara. Ankara thinks that Ralston demonstrated a strong stance in understanding the importance of PKK terrorism to Turkey and the sensitivities over this issue. He underlined during every meeting that the PKK will never ever be considered a negotiating partner, which was very much appreciated by the Turkish officials he met. A Turkish official summed up the meetings with Ralston in an overall positive way by saying that Ralston seems very determined to deal with the issue and he is capable of establishing political will on this problem within the Washington administration."

The Ismailaga Mosque Murder

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All papers: Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan lashed out at the media reports concerning the killing of a Muslim preacher (Imam) and the subsequent lynching of the assailant, saying the reporting of the incident was "provocative." At a meeting with AKP provincial leaders, Erdogan criticized the press for focusing on the alleged lynching of the murderer while ignoring the incident itself. Erdogan said there is no evidence that the murderer had been lynched in the mosque, and slammed the press for not even extending condolences to the family of the preacher killed. Interior Minister Aksu said the Ismailaga Mosque murder is being investigated and there is no question of covering up the incident. In a related story, Turkish religious affairs "Diyanet" chief Ali Bardakoglu complained about the Diyanet's need for more staff, saying "Wherever we cannot appoint preachers, the communities pick their own. At present, some 15,000 mosques do not have Diyanet preachers."

Senator Blocks Hoagland's Nomination as Ambassador to Yerevan
Hurriyet, Zaman: Democrat Senator Robert Menendez put a hold on the nomination of Richard Hoagland to be Ambassador to Armenia to protest the Bush Administration's refusal to describe the events of the early 20th century as 'Armenian genocide.' Last week, the Senate Foreign Relations committee voted to send Hoagland's nomination to the full Senate for a vote. Under Senate rules, until Menendez lifts his hold, the Senate cannot vote on Hoagland's nomination. Hoagland had refused to use 'genocide' at his confirmation hearing in June to describe the events, whereas, the current Ambassador John Evans, at a social event, referred to the events as 'genocide.'

British Artist Taken into Custody for Insulting Prime Minister Erdogan

Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet: British artist Michael Dickinson faces from one to three years in prison for depicting PM Erdogan as a dog attached to a leash made out of the American flag. Michael Dickinson was taken into custody on Tuesday after he refused to put away the poster which he displayed in a court hearing for anti-war activist Erhan Kara. British daily The Guardian quoted Dickinson as saying "I wasn't even planning to open the poster up. But, then I said, if I am here to defend the freedom of speech, here it is."

Editorial Commentary on Afghanistan

Commenting in the economic-political daily Dunya, Zafer Atay notes

that NATO is facing a "difficult challenge" in Afghanistan: "NATO failed to establish significant fundamental changes in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom, which started five years ago. The recent attacks by the Taliban against NATO forces demonstrate the fact that the NATO operation led to the collapse of the Taliban but the leadership remained there. Despite the elections and a parliament with elected members, Afghanistan is still living in the feudal age where thousands of rural gangs are controlling the area outside of Kabul and they are all involved in drug trafficking. The Taliban continues to exploit religious sensitivities of poor and illiterate people all over Afghanistan. Moreover the Taliban finds it very easy to conduct its propaganda because there is no difficulty with money flow. Bin Laden and other radical groups are providing cash, and rural gangs in Pakistan are providing militants as well as weapons. NATO faces a very difficult challenge because many NATO members have dedicated very little to the Afghanistan mission."

TV Highlights
NTV, 7.00 A.M.
Domestic News

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, in Paris to attend the conference "Dialog of the Peoples and Cultures," met with his French counterpart Philippe Douste-Blazy and President Jacques Chirac to discuss Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iran and Cyprus.

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- Speaker Arinc called the Turkish Parliament into an extraordinary meeting on September 19 to discuss EU harmonization bills.
- A report by the International Campaign 2006 against landmines urged Turkey, a party to the Agreement Prohibiting Land Mines, to destroy its stock before the year 2008. The report said Turkey kept three million landmines in stock.
- The ruling AKP receives 15,000 letters and emails from around Turkey every month in which 90 percent voice objections to deployment of Turkish troops to Lebanon.

International News

- An Iraqi insurgent group, Lions of Truth Brigades, threatened Wednesday to kill a Turkish driver, Yildirim Tek, abducted on July 27, unless Ankara pulls back the Vinsan Co operating in Samarra, Iraq.
- Turkey will take the regional command of ISAF in Kabul in April 2007 instead of deploying additional troops to Afghanistan.
- Turkish Cyprus "President" Mehmet Ali Talat tasked the outgoing Prime Minister Ferdi Sabit Syer with forming a new government. Soyer is expected to set a coalition government with a new party formed by four lawmakers who have resigned from UBP and DP last week.
- Palestinian President Abbas confirmed that he would ask Prime Minister Haniya to form a new government.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON